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Salisbury Historic District Design Guidelines



1.1 Introduction

Founded in 1753, Salisbury enjoys a rich heritage of historic architecture dating from the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The wealth of historic domestic, commercial, and institutional buildings from a variety of stylistic periods contribute to the distinctive character of the City's downtown and adjacent historic neighborhoods.

Beginning in 1975 with the designation of West Square as its first locally zoned historic district, Salisbury and its citizens have taken a progressive approach to identifying and preserving the city's historic resources. In the years following West Square's designation, four other local historic districts have been identified in Salisbury. Within these locally zoned districts, the Historic Preservation Commission implements the City's historic preservation zoning codes.

In addition to Salisbury's five local districts, there are ten historic districts individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Buildings in a National Register historic district are eligible for a variety of grants and incentives intended to promote the protection and rehabilitation of historic structures.

National Register listing has no effect on what a private citizen may do with his or her property. It affects only what government agencies might do to harm the integrity of publicly owned buildings. However, state enabling legislation allows localities to set up historic districts and designate landmarks, thereby restricting various alterations to and demolition of the structures and the sites within a locally designated area.

The design guidelines published in this book are used by the Historic Preservation Commission in reviewing the appropriateness of proposed changes in the local historic district. The accompanying narrative and illustrations have been developed to provide detailed information and direction to the property owners and the residents of the local historic district, as well as to interested citizens. The appendixes offer additional technical resources, references, and definitions.

1.2 Application of These Guidelines

The Historic District Design Guidelines are divided into two documents: one for residential and another for non-residential building types. The majority of the guidelines are the same regardless of building type. However, in order to provide a more concise guideline document for individual classes of buildings, only those guidelines for the specific building type are presented in each section. For instance, “Wood” or “Masonry” guidelines would be the same regardless of building type. However, “Storefront” guidelines would only be presented in the guidelines for non-residential structures considering residential buildings do not have storefronts. Similarly, “Porches” are discussed only in the guidelines for residential buildings.

Often within our historic districts, a structure may have been converted into a use different from that of the original building type. For instance, there are several cases where a historic single-family home has been converted into a commercial or office use. These guidelines are applied to the historic building type, not the existing use. Therefore, if a single-family home has been converted into an office, the guidelines for residential building types would apply.

The only exception to this would be the guidelines for Site Features. Office or commercial uses have use-specific needs for parking, signage and landscaping. A single-family home that has been converted into an office building would use non-residential guidelines for all site features. Occasionally, a certain building may have changed significantly from its historic building-type and can no longer be classified as such. The Conrad Brem house, for example, is one of the oldest examples of a residential structure still existing in Salisbury. However, it has changed significantly over time and retains little of its original residential character. In this case, guidelines for non-residential would apply. Obviously, storefront changes to this building could not be effectively reviewed using the residential guidelines.

Finally, there may be instances where a vacant lot in a local historic district is to be developed. The guidelines for New Construction are somewhat different for residential and non-residential; however, they predominantly call for new construction to be compatible with its neighbors and surrounding district in terms of the overall scale and proportions of the proposed building. In fact, there is no mention in the New Construction guidelines of specific building types, only the relationship of the new building to its surroundings. Therefore, the application of these guidelines would depend on the proposed building type. If a non-residential structure is proposed in downtown, for example, it would use New Construction guidelines for non-residential. Similarly, if a new home is proposed in the West Square district, guidelines for residential would apply.

1.3 Secretary of Interiors Standards for Rehabilitation

In addition to adopting its own design guidelines, the Historic Preservation Commission has adopted the United States Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation for use in determining the appropriateness of proposed work in the historic district. These ten national standards for rehabilitation were first developed in 1976 by the National Park Service. The latest revised version follows:

- 1** A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.
- 2** The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.
- 3** Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.
- 4** Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.
- 5** Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.
- 6** Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.
- 7** Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.
- 8** Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.
- 9** New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.
- 10** New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

1.4 Process

1.4.1 Historic Preservation Commission

The City of Salisbury Historic Preservation Commission was created in 1975 when the first local historic district, West Square, was approved. Since then, the Commission has reviewed exterior changes in each of the five local historic districts (West Square, North Main Street, Ellis Street Graded School, Brooklyn-South Square, and Downtown).

Membership

The Commission is currently made up of nine members appointed by City Council. Salisbury zoning code requires that a majority of the members of the commission shall have demonstrated special interest, experience or education in history, architecture, archaeology or related fields.

Responsibilities

The Historic Preservation Commission has a number of responsibilities including, first and foremost, protecting the architectural integrity of Salisbury's local historic districts. To meet that responsibility, the commission reviews applications from property owners and residents for certificates of appropriateness to make certain kinds of exterior changes within the historic district. Applications are reviewed to determine if the proposed changes are consistent with the commission's criteria and design guidelines.

Other Commission responsibilities include recommending to City Council any additions or changes to the boundaries of Salisbury's Local Historic Districts. This would include reviewing and making recommendations on proposed new districts. The Commission also reviews and makes recommendations to the State concerning National Register Historic District nominations.

Meetings

The commission meets on the second Thursday of each month at 5:15 p.m. in the City Council chambers, located on the first floor of the City Hall, 217 South Main Street. The public is invited to attend these meetings.

1.4.2 Being in a Historic District

Salisbury has ten **National Register Historic Districts** and five **Local Historic Districts**. It is often the case that the boundary of a local district shares that of a National Register district, but the two designations are quite different. While these guidelines apply only to locally zoned historic districts, both types of districts are described here.

National Register Historic Districts

Listing on the *National Register of Historic Places* is largely honorary. The US Department of the Interior, through the National Park Service, facilitates the National Register program that represents an official listing of cultural resources worthy of preservation. Properties on the register include districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects that are significant in their history, architecture, archaeology or culture to the area, region, and nation as a whole.

National Register listing also carries with it the potential for funding assistance through Federal and State Tax Credits for the restoration of qualifying historic structures. Both the Federal and State incentives have proven to be an excellent tool in the revitalization of downtown Salisbury.

The National Register and tax credit programs are administered entirely by the Federal and State governments.

Local Historic Districts

Local historic districts are those zoned with the historic district overlay as outlined in section XVII of Salisbury's Zoning Ordinance. This overlay requires that a certificate of appropriateness be obtained prior to the commencement of any exterior project. Use of the property, setbacks and any other zoning requirements are determined by the underlying zoning district.

Local districts are those where City Council has designated, through the historic overlay, that the area is significant to the history and architecture of Salisbury and is worthy of preservation. A property owner within a local district will never be forced to make any changes to or improve his or her property. However, if an exterior change is proposed, the Commission reviews the appropriateness of the change to the property and district.

Approvals of the Historic Preservation Commission follow two forms: **Minor Works** projects are those common projects and tasks (including maintenance and repair) which do not alter the exterior appearance of the property. The majority of projects would fall under this category. The second approval would be obtaining a **Certificate of Appropriateness** from the full Historic

Preservation Commission. These procedures are discussed in the following section.

Local Preservation Incentives

In addition to the state and federal tax credits for qualifying rehabilitations, it is possible for projects to receive a local matching grant for façade improvements. The Municipal Service District Incentive Grant is a competitive grant program administered by the City's Land Management and Development Department. It offers 50-50 matching grants for façade improvements that help preserve the unique character of the historic property and district. For more information, contact Lynn Raker at 638-5235.

1.4.3 Certificates of Appropriateness

Within the local historic district, property owners are required to obtain a certificate of appropriateness before beginning any type of exterior construction, alteration, or demolition. The local historic district overlay zoning is in addition to all other laws and codes and does not exempt a property from, or diminish, such requirements. The certificate of appropriateness is a preliminary step in obtaining a building permit if a permit is required for proposed work. A certificate of appropriateness certifies that the proposed changes are consistent with the design guidelines and are appropriate within the historic district context. Neither interior alterations nor most normal maintenance work requires a certificate of appropriateness.

Certificates of appropriateness are approved either through minor works (section 1.4.4) or by the applicant appearing before the full board. Most projects fall under minor works and, if they meet the Design Guidelines, can be approved in just a few days. If the project is more extensive and requires going before the Commission, the applicant can get approval in 10 to 45 days, depending on when the application is submitted. Projects that have documentation of approval from the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office for Historic Preservation Tax Credits may be reviewed under minor works.

Applications for certificates of appropriateness are processed through the office of the Zoning Administrator in the Development Services Department of the City of Salisbury. The application forms are available from the department, located at 110 North Main Street. Information may also be obtained by calling the Zoning Administrator at 638-5207. A sample application is included in Appendix A. Applications should be submitted at least ten days before a regularly scheduled meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission in order to be mailed out with the agenda.

If an applicant cannot appear in person at the commission meeting, he or she may appoint a duly authorized agent by executing the proper form provided by the office of the Zoning Administrator. A sample copy of that form is also included in Appendix A.

All applications must be complete before the Historic Preservation Commission may consider them. To be complete, an application must include all the facts necessary for a full understanding of the applicant's intentions. The application must provide specific information regarding the work so that the commission can determine if there will be any damage or detrimental change to the historic character of the district. The commission does not consider interior arrangement, nor does it take action except for the purpose of preventing demolition, construction, reconstruction, alterations, restorations, or moving of a building, structure, appurtenant fixtures, or outdoor advertising signs in the historic district, that would be incongruous with the historic aspects of the district.

Applicants doing new construction or significant additions meet with the Design Review Advisory Committee (DRAC) prior to going to the full Commission. The DRAC is a five-person committee made up of design and preservation professionals from the community. They make no decisions or formal recommendations to the Commission, but rather advise the property owner as to the application of the Design Guidelines to the specific project. The DRAC also ensures the applicant has all of the necessary documentation and information needed at the Commission meeting.

Applications should include any relevant supplemental materials, such as accurate drawings, site or plot plans, samples of materials, color chips, and photographs.

Once it is issued, a certificate of appropriateness is valid for six months. It may be renewed.

1.4.4 Minor Works

Minor works are defined as those exterior changes that do not involve substantial alterations, additions or removals that could impair the integrity of the landmark or property in the historic district.

A certificate of appropriateness application, when determined to involve a minor work, may be reviewed and approved according to review criteria listed below. Items 1 through 17 are reviewed by staff while 18 through 31 are reviewed by the minor works committee. The minor works committee consists of the Historic Preservation Commission chairman and vice-chairman as well as the zoning administrator.

If the committee does not issue a certificate of appropriateness, the applicant will be advised to make a formal application to the Historic Preservation Commission. No application may be denied without formal action by the Historic Preservation Commission.

An application may receive a certificate of appropriateness from the committee if it falls under one of the following categories of minor works:

Minor Work Projects Approved by Staff

- 1** Repainting of a structure in colors IDENTICAL to those existing on the structure.
- 2** Replacement of missing or deteriorating features such as siding and trim, porch floors, ceilings, columns and balustrades, shutters, or architectural details, with new materials that are IDENTICAL to the original in dimension, material, and configuration.
- 3** Picket fences when:
 - (a) Constructed of wood;
 - (b) Generally similar to a design set forth in the design guidelines as appropriate to the district, and to the style of the house;
 - (c) Substantially open in character;
 - (d) The height on the front, side, rear, or interior location of the lot, shall not exceed forty-two (42) inches in height. The picket fence shall be in a location conforming to the zoning regulations; and
 - (e) Painted or stained white, or in a color to match the house trim or body.

However, the following fences require approval by the full Historic Preservation Commission:

- (a) Fences constructed of any non-wood materials;
 - (b) Fences erected along the periphery of any parking area designed to accommodate more than three (3) cars; or
 - (c) Picket fences which are unpainted, or which are painted in a color other than white or the color of the house trim or body.
- 4** Wooden privacy fences in the rear yards as long as the following requirements are met:
- (a) They do not exceed six feet in height and do not extend beyond the rear corner of the house;
 - (b) The style conforms to one of the approved styles shown in the Fences and Walls chapter of the Historic District Design Guidelines; and
 - (c) The fence can be left natural or can be stained to match the trim or body color of the house.
- 5** Pruning trees over 18" in circumference at 4 ½ feet above the ground which requires the assistance of a tree service, provided that on-site consultation with the city landscape manager and staff is held in advance.
- 6** Re-roofing a house with similar materials in a color pre-approved by the Commission. Re-roofing a non-residential building with similar materials where the roof is not visible from the street.
- 7** Chimney caps that are not visible from the street.
- 8** Installing gutters and downspouts painted to match the house or trim, as long as no significant architectural features are removed.
- 9** Removing non-original materials (less than 50 years old) including substitute siding.
- 10** Installation of window air conditioning units, or roof-mounted mechanical equipment, including central air units and generators, when located on the side or rear of a structure not facing a public street, and which cannot easily be seen from the street or are screened from view with the building parapet or appropriate fencing and shrubbery.
- 11** Satellite dishes provided that they are a maximum of 18 inches in diameter, and they are placed on a rear elevation or screened from public view.

- 12** Normal size television and radio antennas (citizen band and ham operators shall require a certificate of appropriateness as provided for in Section 17.09, Appendix B, Zoning, in the City of Salisbury Code of Ordinances).
- 13** Storm doors with full-view glass with a baked enamel finish to match the trim of the house on entrances not facing a public right-of-way.
- 14** Storm or screen doors which are wooden and which are stained in natural wood color or painted in a color to match the house or trim.
- 15** Storm windows which have a painted or baked enamel finish (providing color matches window trim or is appropriate to the building).
- 16** When the City of Salisbury Director of Land Management and Development or his designee rules that a tree larger than 18 inches in diameter at 4½ feet above the ground is diseased or severely damaged, it can be removed and shall be replaced with a similar type plant material contained on the plant list of the Design Guidelines.
- 17** Renewal for an additional six-month period of an expired certificate of appropriateness where no change to approved plans is being proposed, and there has been no change to circumstances under which the certificate was approved initially.

Minor Work Projects Approved by Minor Works Committee

- 18** Signage that is in the appropriate location, made of the correct materials, is consistent with these design guidelines, and is compliant with the Zoning Ordinance.
- 19** Painting previously painted surfaces in a color and paint scheme that is appropriate to the building and meets design guidelines for Paint and Exterior Color.
- 20** Erection, alteration or removal of temporary features that are necessary to ease difficulties associated with a medical condition, or temporary features associated with construction or repairs, but which do not permanently alter exterior features.
- 21** A building identification sign which:
 - (a) Contains the name of the building and/or the year built as listed in the Design Guidelines;
 - (b) Is compatible in color, material and location to the building;
 - (c) Does not exceed three (3) square feet in area; and

- (d) Is in compliance with the city sign ordinance.
- 22** Patios constructed of common stone or red brick, and bricked-in areas on the side or rear of the structure at ground level and not abutting a right-of-way, when the height does not exceed six (6) inches above the adjacent ground level.
- 23** Sidewalks constructed with old-style brick.
- 24** Re-roofing a non-residential building with similar materials or replacing with new materials where the re-roofing is not visible. New flashing, coping, and similar roofing details that are compatible, provided that they do not damage existing historic materials and do not significantly change the appearance of the roof.
- 25** Chimney caps that are visible from the street.
- 26** Replacing awnings with a different color material, provided there is no change to the original placement or configuration of the frame.
- 27** Roof and basement vents provided that they do not diminish the original design of the roof or structure, or destroy historic building materials and details, and provided that they are located on back slopes or inconspicuous areas.
- 28** Low-profile shingled ridge vents, provided that they match the existing roof color, and they do not diminish the original design of the roof or destroy historic roofing materials and details.
- 29** Communication facilities and satellite dishes provided that they are located in an inconspicuous area or are effectively screened and not visible from a public street.
- 30** Roof-mounted solar panels, provided they are located on back slopes or inconspicuous areas.
- 31** Projects that have documentation of approval from the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office for Historic Preservation Tax Credits.

